(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Various provisions under the Contempt of Courts Act 1971 were reviewed recently in pursuance of the recommendations of the P. C. Jain Commission to review old Acts/Rules and it was decided not to amend the Act of 1971, for the present.

Open Ballot System for Elections

4675. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any consultations are going on between the Law and Home Ministries with regard to proposed introduction of an open ballot system to curb rampant use of reported money power in elections recently;

(b) whether the Law Minister has informed the Home Minister that no Constitutional amendment is required as the change could be effected by amendment of some existing rules, as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 6th April 2000; and

(c) if so what final decisions Government have taken so far in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) to (c) In the recently held biennial elections to Rajya Sabha, certain issues like cross-voting and use of money power have attracted much attention. Though some corrective steps, like introduction of open ballot system at these elections, have been suggested, proposals in this regards have, however, not taken any concrete shape so far. In this connection, in response to an informal query by the Home Minister, I have indeed written to him expressing therein my personal views. However, the question being important and sensitive, requires thorough examination before taking any final decision in the matter.

Change in the Principles for Appeals

4676. DR. A.K. PATEL: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have changed the principles for appeals in the High Courts;

(b) whether the petitioners have to directly appeal in the Supreme Court by cutting one chance of appeal in High Courts;

(c) whether it will be costlier for the poor to move the Supreme Court;

(d) whether the evidence will be recorded before private commissioner, if so, who will bear the cost;

(e) whether these are the methods to curtail the number of cases; and

(f) what other steps are being taken to get the cases disposed off expeditiously?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) The right to appeal against the decision of a single judge of a High Court to a Division Bench of the same High Court under the Letters Patent or any other instrument is proposed to be curtailed by substituting existing section 100A in the Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Act, 1999 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 by a new section 100A in matters where any appeal from an original or appellate decree or order is heard or decided by a single judge or where any writ, direction or order is issued or made on an application under article 226 or article 227 of the Constitution by a single judge of a High Court.

(b) No Sir. The petitioner's right of one appeal to the High Court has not been curtailed. Only second appeal available to the petitioners under the Letters Patent will no longer be available, if and when the new amendments is brought into force.

(c) The question does not arise.

(d) No Sir. A commissioner will be appointed by the Court from a panel of practising lawyers who will record the evidence under Rule 4 Order XVIII. Cost will be paid by the Court or by the parties as decided by the Court.

(e) The various steps so far proposed are intended to reduce the arrears of court cases.

(f) To get the cases disposed of expeditiously, the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 has been amended by the Code of Civil Procedure

(Amendment) Act, 1999 (46 of 1999) on the basis of recommendations made by Justice Malimath Committee, Law Commission's Reports and the report of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation (11th Lok Sabha).

None of the above amendments in the Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Act, 1999 has yet been brought into force.

Abstension of Electorates from Voting

4677. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the reasons for the electorate comprising the intelligentsia abstaining from voting; and

(b) whether any survey was undertaken by any agency to find out the details of such voters; and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI) (a) and (b) The Government has no specific information on the voting behaviour of intelligentsia and is not aware of any survey conducted by any agency in this regard.

Freeze on Seats at the current level in Lok Sabha

4678. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to freeze the number of seats in the Lok Sabha at the current level of 543 till the year 2026;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) if not, what is the plan of Government about increase of seats in the Lok Sabha in coming year?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) and (b) The Constitution 42nd Amendment Act, 1976 laid an embargo on undertaking fresh delimitation of constituencies until the figures of the first census taken after the year 2000 become available, vide proviso to article 82 and 170(3) of the Constitution. The measure was undertaken to boost family planning norms. The Government has been receiving representations to extend the embargo on the plea